

Herefordshire Voice

April 2008

THE HEREFORDSHIRE
partnership 

Thank you

The last Herefordshire Voice survey was completed by 59% of panellists, including a number of new panellists who were recruited through the Herefordshire Satisfaction Survey. We would like to welcome all the new members, and thank those who took the time to complete the last survey.

Learning from our mistakes

A lot of you said that you found the last survey a bit heavy and complicated to fill in, and that you would like more feedback of survey results. Hopefully you will find this survey and newsletter to be an improvement. The next few paragraphs summarise the results obtained in last September's "community involvement" survey. The full report is available online at www.herefordshirepartnership.com/hv along with all the others.

Influencing local decisions

Around half of respondents agreed that they could influence decisions affecting their local area. Amongst those who had used each method of getting involved in local decision-making, the methods seen as most effective were voting in elections, and joining community groups or residents associations. 85% agreed that there wasn't enough publicity around consultations, and 80% agreed that the decisions made were too influenced by vested interests. For all the individual aspects of Council surveys covered, more respondents said each was poor or very poor, than said it was good or very good. Overall, 7% thought that Council surveys were good or very good, while 40% thought they were poor or very poor.

Amongst those who had made use of Parish Plans / Town Plans, the aspect most frequently thought to be good or very good was "knowing what's going on and when"; the worst aspect was "how accurately the published plan reflects the consultation results". Overall, 26% of those who had made use of Parish Plans / Town Plans thought that the consultation process was good or very good, while 29% thought it was poor or very poor.

Amongst those who had made use of Community Forums / PACT, the most positive aspect was "how easy it is to get involved"; the most negative was "how effective it is in getting things done". Overall, 28% of those who had made use of Community Forums / PACT thought they were good or very good, while 19% thought they were poor or very poor. With regard to Herefordshire Voice surveys, the most positive aspect was "how easy it is to get involved"; the most negative was "getting feedback on results and decisions". Overall, 32% considered Herefordshire Voice surveys to be good or very good, while 14% thought they were poor or very poor.

Engaging with the Council

Amongst those who had tried to make contact with their local councillor, 87% were satisfied with how easy they were to contact, while 54% were satisfied with how well their query was resolved. Amongst those who had attended or wanted to attend a Council meeting, 61% were satisfied with understanding the proceedings, while 32% were satisfied that their views were listened to. With regard to alternative arrangements for voting, the largest proportion of respondents said each would have no effect on their likelihood to vote. When asked about the security and reliability of each alternative method, the highest concerns were seen with regard to postal voting and electronic voting.

Herefordshire Matters

71% of respondents thought the current frequency of 6 issues a year was about right; 4% thought it should not be published at all. 85% found the articles easy to read with a further 14% thinking this was true to some extent. 33% found the information useful, with a further 60% thinking this to some extent. 75% felt the magazine kept them well informed about the Council and what it's doing.

Respect and consideration

38% thought that people not treating other people with respect and consideration was a problem in the local area. 32% witnessed a lack of respect and consideration shown towards themselves a few times or month or more frequently. The age groups most frequently seen as likely to cause a problem by not showing respect and consideration to others were teenagers (13 – 17 year olds) and younger working age adults (18 – 30 year olds). 76% thought the current generation of young people showed less respect than their parents' or grandparents' generations, while 23% thought they were no different.

The kind of things respondents most frequently saw as being a problem in the local area were litter dropping, dog fouling in public places, and parents not taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children. The things most frequently seen as being a main cause of a lack of respect and consideration were poor discipline in the home, a breakdown in family values, and misuse of alcohol. Amongst possible actions to improve respect and consideration, the one viewed as mostly likely to have a positive impact was stronger discipline in the home.

Your views put into action

In December 2006, we sent you a survey about access to services in Herefordshire. The information you gave us has been shared with the organisations that provide these services, and in many cases has provided evidence which helped to support plans for a number of improvements.

One of the problems most frequently highlighted was getting an NHS dentist – 52% of respondents had encountered a problem with this. Recent improvements made by the Primary Care Trust include the opening of new dental practices in Hereford, Dental Access Centres in Leominster and Hereford, purchasing additional time from existing dentists to treat patients from the central waiting list, and an initiative to clear the orthodontics waiting list. Amongst users of a mobile library, 26% had encountered a problem with knowing the routes and times. Improvements have been made to the timetables, to make them simpler to understand, and people are now given the dates and times for the next few months for their usual stop.

A number of improvements have been made to footpaths in the county, including the Ross and Ledbury Town Trails, Ledbury Riverside Walk, and paths at Queenswood Country Park. There are also plans to improve disabled access to Hereford Leisure Pool.

As a result of the survey, the Courtyard are looking at improving the external signage and branding of the building.

This survey

The survey included with this newsletter is entitled "Council communications and customer contact". The four main areas being investigated are as follows:

Which local media sources you prefer for finding out about the Council; the extent to which certain local services are recognised as being provided by the Council; "Info in Herefordshire" services; and experiences of making a complaint to the Council or requesting a Council service.

Future surveys

It had originally been planned that a Herefordshire Voice survey in February of this year would cover planning and development in Herefordshire, as part of a larger ongoing consultation on the same subject. In order to fit in with revised timescales for this wider consultation, the Herefordshire Voice part is now planned to happen in June or July this year.

I hope you find this survey interesting, and thank you for your help completing it. If you have any questions, please contact Tony Cramp on 01432 383 615.